

Top Secret



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IRAN: Shah moves vigorously against opium traffic.
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IRAN: The Shah is moving vigorously to halt the illicit traffic in opium.

Earlier this month Iranian authorities confiscated some 12.7 tons of opium, the largest single haul taken anywhere in the world and approximating Iran's total annual seizures in recent years. The cache, intercepted at a town near the Afghanistan border, was in a truck trailer, probably of the type that regularly carries airplane fuel to Afghanistan. The US previously had suggested to the Iranians that these tankers may be engaged in illicit drug traffic.

This tactic, which differs sharply from the smugglers' traditional use of animals to transport Afghani opium across the mountains into Iran, may be a reaction to improved field intercept capabilities of the Iranian gendarmerie. The Shah is providing his anti-narcotic forces with troop-carrying helicopter gunships, off-road motorcycles, night vision equipment and improved communications devices. The latest seizure probably will instill further enthusiasm for enforcement, particularly in view of the substantial cash rewards that accompany seizures.

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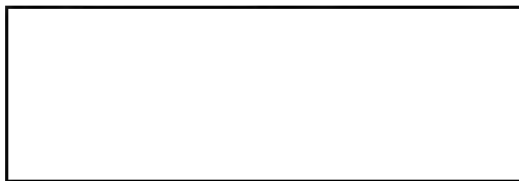
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